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ABSTRACT

Achieving good quality in Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) training is hampered by the lack of a common definition of quality. Five ideas have been consistent in definitions: targeting programs; long-term, in-depth training; basic education; work skills training; and supportive services and guidance. A definition must include suggestions on how to achieve good quality. One report provides a chart that outlines components in these areas within a high-quality training process: client selection and matching, job relevant instruction, job placement process, and employment outcomes. Another piece of the quality argument regards specific changes to improve JTPA through targeting; proper contracting and procurement; funding only of training activities; strengthened federal monitoring; the establishment of a National Training Institute; oversight of on-the-job-training; and program accreditation and staff credentialing. The challenge of high quality means steps must be taken to lay the groundwork for changes, including developing a process of change; making a realistic assessment; identifying JTPA strengths; and communicating with the state and Department of Labor. (The final section is a directors' dialog. Three directors answer questions relating to how quality is defined in their service delivery areas; how that definition was developed; how good quality is being achieved; the future direction of JTPA; and examples of high quality.) (YLB)

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John Thomas . . . NACo Executive Director
Larry Jones. . . Associate Legislative Director

Training and Employment Programs Staff:
Jerald T. McNeil. . . . . Director, NACo Training and Employment Programs/DOL Region VIII
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Cynthia Marshall . . . . . Production Assistant
LaVonda Slade . . . . . Secretary

The Challenge of Quality

Volume 20-90 September 5, 1990

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Quality is hard to define. But five ideas seem consistent - target programs to those most in need, provide more long term training, provide basic education, provide realistic work skills, and acknowledge the need for support.

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Improvements are suggested for every step of the training process
Many trouble spots have been identified in JTPA during the debate on quality. DOL plans to work on many of these even before any amendments are finalized.

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The environment is not stable, but employment and training has been here for 50 years. There is a process of change that requires a change leader, realistic assessment, knowing your strengths, patting the SDA, PIC members and local elected officials on the back for past and future successes, and communication with the state and DOL.

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Directors realize the bottom line requires the best results for the public investment.

James Ledbetter, Director, SDA 18, Concho Valley Council of Governments, San Angelo, Texas
Greg Wince, Director, CORC Job Training, Newark, Ohio
Gwen Buseman, Director, SDA 2, North Iowa Area Community College, Mason City, Iowa

THE CHALLENGE OF QUALITY

The JTPA Amendments have been a topic of conversation for over two years. The conversation has included many topics but there is always an underlying concern - how to improve a quality program.

The amendments may not happen. Time within the 101st Congress is fleeing and many other pressing issues are not yet resolved. But the issue of quality does not disappear if the amendments disappear. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has already started implementing some of the proposed changes through the performance standards and issues raised during monitoring.

JTPA needs to face the Challenge of Quality and it is a large challenge. Local areas must merge the national debate and definitions of quality with the needs and concerns of their own area. Target groups differ based on the population of an area; training to be provided varies based both on the individual and the labor market; and the amount of money available to the SDA can impact on the connections that must be made, the number of individuals that are served, and the length of training.

JTPA's strength is its flexibility. The SDAs, PICs and LEOs have already developed a strong partnership that has access to the local community. This partnership creates the ability to understand both the needs of the participants and the employers and to respond to those needs. JTPA is capable of change and it is its flexibility and strong partnerships that will make that change easier to accomplish.

This is the first of a series of *JTPA Issues* that will focus on the Challenge of Quality. This issue will provide an overview of the Challenge - the different definitions of quality, the impact for JTPA, suggestions for change. The rest of the series will look at three areas of change in more detail - Client Selection and Matching Process, Job Relevant Instruction and Job Placement Process/Quality Employment Outcomes.

DEFINITION OF QUALITY

Quality is never scientific. While many are concerned about the quality of training in JTPA, education and JOBS, agreeing how quality can be achieved is not as easy as stating the concern. Even defining quality becomes a barrier to knowing how to achieve quality. Is it training that overcomes barriers participants face; training that provides jobs with high wages and benefits; training for occupational areas that will ensure increasingly responsible positions or progress in a career path; training that provides high school credentials; or some combination of these results?

Quality can be dependent on the area and individual being served. Realistic results for a small town area that is increasing its one major business may be different than results for an urban area that has career choices in 50 different areas. High school graduation may be an achievement of great wonder to an individual who left school in the 4th grade yet very limiting to another who sees the potential for a sales position within a large corporation if they can get through college.

But the challenge of quality is something that JTPA must face. The studies done by the General Accounting Office (GAO), audits and testimony by the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the various negative articles about JTPA has made quality an important issue. But most important is the realization that there are few dollars available and a need to gain the greatest long term results possible out of those few dollars.

The debate over the past two years on JTPA, Vocational Education and Welfare Reform has provided many different pictures and arguments about quality. There are five ideas that have been consistent through most of those arguments.

- Target programs to those with the greatest need
- Provide more long-term, in-depth training
- Provide basic education as a major component
- Provide training for work skills that are realistic and usable in this and future labor markets
- Acknowledge and address the other needs for success - supportive services, self esteem and guidance

Secretary of Labor, **Elizabeth Dole**, in testimony before the House Education and Labor Committee June 6, defined quality as:

> "Today's labor market demands a JTPA that provides more than just training for a job - but also basic skills training, literacy, counseling, remedial education - a total support system that can provide the skills and motivation for a lifetime of productive work.
>
> It demands a JTPA closely linked with other essential services, creating a comprehensive human resource system. And it demands a JTPA that remains true to its principles of private-public partnerships and accountability."

The Berkeley Planning Associates and SRI International did a study on the quality of training for DOL. The report, *Improving the Quality of Training Under JTPA*, was issued in January. While the report is an excellent summary of the definition of quality and the direction that programs can take, its study of where JTPA is in achieving this quality of training is not as strong. It is based on a sample of 15 SDAs, only 2% of all SDAs.

But it is important to listen to its definition of quality training.

" ..Training must be appropriate along two dimensions in order to be 'quality training'. First, it must be appropriate to the needs of participants; it must overcome their specific barriers to employment and provide them with the capabilities to perform well paying jobs. Second, it must be appropriate to the needs of employers for workers who can fulfill the requirements of jobs available in the local labor market. The quality of training programs is judged by the appropriateness of the match of training program design to the participant's needs and to the nature of the jobs for which the participants are being prepared."

The report also outlines system level impacts on quality training.

" System level factors influencing the quality of JTPA training can be divided into direct and indirect influences. Among the direct influences are SDA program design decisions (e.g. whether to target specific groups of clients, what services to offer and how to specify required performance levels in service provider contracts) and characteristics of service providers (e.g. service provider philosophy of training and whether the service provider has access to additional funding sources beyond JTPA funds).

Federal JTPA policies have an important impact on SDAs' design of quality services. Factors include the level of JTPA funding; the existence of the federally initiated JTPA performance standards; and various JTPA spending restrictions, including limits on administrative expenditures and client support costs.

State policies can also have an important influence on JTPA program design. Many states have policies for serving specific hard to serve groups. These policies range from monitoring of equal opportunity requirements to the establishment of state performance standards for serving specific groups.

Several local factors may also affect program design quality. These include the PIC's involvement in the design and administration of JTPA in each local area; the involvement and program orientation of local elected officials; coordination with the Employment Service, public assistance agencies, schools and other related programs; and characteristics of the SDA itself (e.g. size of the SDA and the characteristics of the eligible population and of the local market rate). "

Robert J. Ivry, Senior Vice President of the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), outlined 6 lessons learned in MDRC's years of research that point towards quality training. These lessons were shared with the House Education and Labor Committee September 29, 1989.

1. Programs which combine school with part-time or summer work experience can increase the earning potential of inschool youth.

2. Short-term low cost services such as job search and even longer-term activities like work experience offered alone seldom produce lasting effects especially for severely disadvantaged youth such as high school dropouts.

3. There is increasing evidence that more intensive and comprehensive programs which include basic skills instruction, occupational training and support services can be effective even for severely disadvantaged youth.

4. It can be difficult and costly to recruit disadvantaged youth into job training programs. Programs working with this population need to engage in active aggressive recruiting, since

many of these young people are reluctant to risk failure and are disconnected from the network of social service agencies.

5. Support services such as child care and transportation assistance, counseling and stipends can be important both in recruiting young people into programs and in helping them to maintain the motivation to continue.

6. Commonly used performance measures such as placement rates and cost-per- placement do not necessarily reflect the difference an employment program makes in the lives of participants. In fact, strategies designed to maximize these outcomes may result in an unintended misallocation of resources.

This final lesson is expanded upon in the testimony. The success of JTPA or any other employment and training program - and the degree to which it produces real benefits for both government budgets and society in general - depends on the degree to which individuals participating in the program experience gains relative to what they would have achieved on their own, without enrolling in the program.

This search for quality is not limited, of course, to JTPA. Approaches and concerns raised in different education processes are interesting to note.

In July, the National Department of Education released six national education goals. These inclued both goals for children and adults.

Goal 1: Readiness for School. By the year 2000, all children in American will start school ready to learn. This meant all disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.

Goal 2: High School Completion. By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent. The dropout rate must be reduced; of those 75% who have dropped out will achieve high school credentials, and the gap in graduation between minorities and nonminorities will be eliminated.

Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship. By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

Goal 4: Science and Mathematics. By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Goal 5: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning. By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Every business will be involved in strengthening the connection between education and work. All workers will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills, from basic to highly technical, needed to adapt to emerging new technologies, work methods, and markets through public and private educational, vocational, technical, workplace or other programs.

Goal 6: Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools. By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

In January, 1990, the Quality Education for Minorities Project released its two year study. They

outlined six goals that had to be achieved to ensure quality education.

1. Ensure that minority students start school prepared to learn. This requires better reaching pre/post natal programs, nutrition programs and education start programs.

2. Ensure that the academic achievement of minority youth is at a level that will enable them upon graduation from high school to enter the workforce or college fully prepared to be successful and not in need of remediation.

3. Significantly increase the participation of minority students in higher education, with a special emphasis on the study of mathematics, science and engineering.

4. Strengthen and increase the number of teachers of minority students.

5. Strengthen the school to work transition so that minority students who do not choose college leave high school prepared with the skills necessary to participate productively in the world of work and with the foundation required to upgrade their skills and advance their careers.

6. Provide quality out of school educational experience and opportunities to supplement the schooling of minority youth and adults.

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education provides information to programs serving special populations through the Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program (TASPP). These populations include dropouts, displaced homemakers, dislocated workers, single/teen mothers, handicapped/disabled, and offenders. In December, 1989, TASPP announced a national recognition program for exemplary vocational education programs serving special needs populations. An exemplary program would have these components.

Program Administration
- Strong Administrative Leadership and Support
- Sufficient Financial Support
- Staff Development
- Formative Program Evaluation
- Summative Program Evaluation

Curriculum and Instruction
- Individualized Curriculum Modifications
- Integration of Academic and Vocational Curricula
- Appropriate Instructional Setting
- Cooperative Learning Experience

Comprehensive Support Service
- Assessment of Individual's Vocational Interests and Abilities
- Instructional Support Services (Aides, Resources)
- Ongoing Career Guidance and Counseling

Formalized Articulation and Communication
- Family/Parent Involvement and Support
- Notification of Both Students and Parents Regarding Vocational Opportunities
- Vocational Educations Involvement in Individualized Planning
- Formalized Transition Planning
- Intra- and Inter-agency Collaboration

Occupational Experience
- Work Experience Opportunities
- Job Placement Services
- Follow-up of Graduates and Non-graduates

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Of course, there is not a definition of quality without suggestions on how to reach quality.

Secretary Dole in her June 6 testimony outlines 6 steps to reach quality.

1. Build on a foundation of solid public-private partnerships — a foundation designed to achieve innovation, flexibility and decentralization.

2. Ensure services are targeted directly to those least likely to succeed on their own by tightening eligibility requirements and channeling more funds to areas and individuals of greatest need. It is essential that we serve those economically disadvantaged persons who also face additional barriers to employment.

3. Use our resources as leverage to bring together other services to form a comprehensive support network — the centerpiece of which is the proposed State linkage and coordination program. No relatively short-term, second- chance program can achieve maximum effectiveness on its own. It must be linked with the schools, welfare and other support agencies.

4. Guarantee investment in quality training to ensure workplace readiness through mandatory assessment, individual service strategies, remediation and literacy instruction and year-round youth services. We know what works best — we should follow proven approaches.

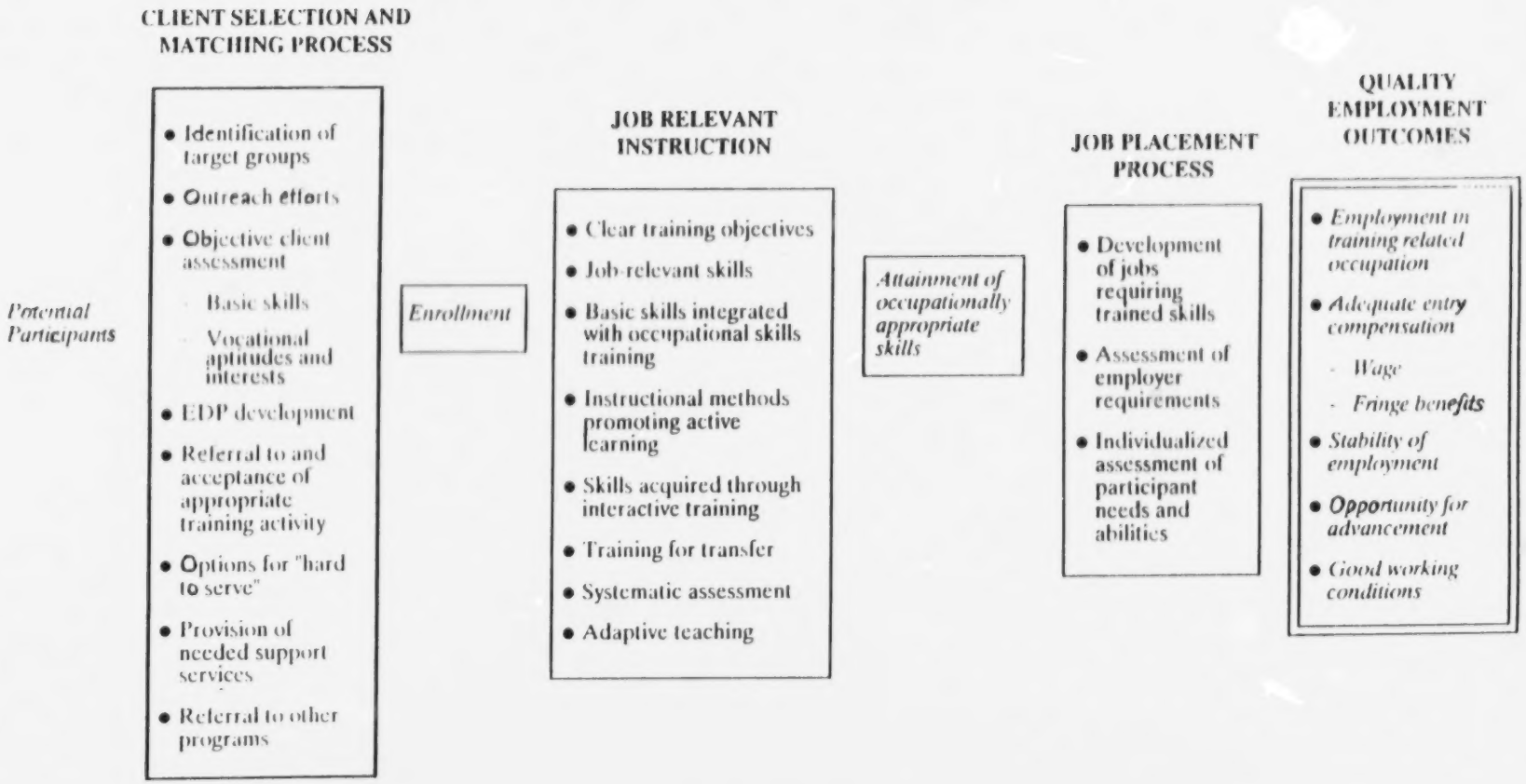
5. Increase accountability throughout the system and promote the highest standards through changes in procurement practices and new achievement standards for participants.

6. Authorize an exciting new initiative — Youth Opportunity Unlimited grants — that will concentrate resources and an integrated array of services in up to 40 high poverty areas to turn around the lives of at-risk youth.

The report on the 'Quality of Training' provides a chart (see following page) that outlines the components within a quality training process. These components are within four areas - Client Selection and Matching, Job Relevant Instruction, Job Placement Process, and Quality Employment Outcomes.

Figure 1

Client-Level Model of Quality Training


CLIENT SELECTION AND MATCHING PROCESS
Potential Participants
• Identification of target groups
• Outreach efforts
• Objective client assessment
- Basic skills
- Vocational aptitudes and interests
• EDP development
• Referral to and acceptance of appropriate training activity
• Options for "hard to serve"
• Provision of needed support services
• Referral to other programs
Enrollment
JOB RELEVANT INSTRUCTION
• Clear training objectives
• Job-relevant skills
• Basic skills integrated with occupational skills training
• Instructional methods promoting active learning
• Skills acquired through interactive training
• Training for transfer
• Systematic assessment
• Adaptive teaching
Attainment of occupationally appropriate skills
JOB PLACEMENT PROCESS
• Development of jobs requiring trained skills
• Assessment of employer requirements
• Individualized assessment of participant needs and abilities
QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES
• Employment in training related occupation
• Adequate entry compensation
- Wage
- Fringe benefits
• Stability of employment
• Opportunity for advancement
• Good working conditions

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The Challenge of Quality

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"Today's labor market demands a JTPA that provides more than just training for a job - but also basic skills training, literacy, counseling, remedial education - a total support system that can provide the skills and motivation for a lifetime of productive work." DOL Secretary Elizabeth Dole, pg. 2

A process of change includes a change leader who can guide the organization through the process, a vision statement that conveys a picture of where you want to go and how you want to get there and the realization that there will be obstacles. It always takes longer and you must learn to live with skeptics and imperfection. pg. 12

"Quality is provided through a workforce readiness concept that identifies a series of needed skills to ready the individual for the workforce - personal skills, educational skills and employability skills." Greg Wince, CORC Job Training, pg. 17

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IMPROVING JTPA

Another piece of the quality argument is specific changes to JTPA that address problems/criticisms that have been raised over the past two years. These have been especially evident in reports done by the General Accounting Office and monitoring done by the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General.

Secretary **Dole** listed the major allegations and DOL's response to each one in her June 6 testimony.

The program is not sufficiently targeted on those disadvantaged persons with serious barriers to employment.

DOL agrees. In today's economy, we should direct our services to those persons who are least likely to succeed without assistance. While JTPA is doing exceedingly well in serving the disadvantaged, a broad consensus has emerged in support of this new policy direction of targeting eligibility more narrowly and distributing funds more directly to where the need exists.

There are allegations of improper contracting and procurement practices by States, PICs and local service providers.

When JTPA was enacted, new concepts of fixed unit price contracting were put in place to help promote program performance and these have worked. There is no question, however, that abuses of these contracting procedures also have occurred. I want to emphasize that I will not tolerate program abuse and will not allow the true success of this program to be marred by even the slightest improprieties in our contracting process. DOL issued official policy in March, 1989 to tighten regulations. Through various legislative proposals, DOL also plans to have more explicit provisions for oversight, corrective action and sanctions by the States and the Secretary, and annual certification by Governors to the Secretary that procurement standards have been implemented.

OJTs have been branded as 'corporate welfare', subsidizing employers for normal hiring and training.

This is simply not the case. OJT has proven to be one of our most successful forms of training under JTPA. We believe that the partial reimbursement of wages of trainees is a legitimate and effective incentive for the hiring and training of unskilled and disadvantaged individuals who would not typically have been hired. JTPA enrollees are economically disadvantaged persons with limited skills. Employers are often unwilling to take the risk of hiring and training these individuals. The JTPA OJT program encourages employers to take that risk. However, to ensure that the duration of OJT is not longer than necessary, the duration should be based on actual requirements of the job and the skill proficiency level of the enrollee and no longer than 6 months.

Activities designed to generate local job creation are not seen as training.

Under the current provisions of JTPA, funds may be legally expended for 'employment generating activities' in order to increase job opportunities for JTPA eligible individuals in the area. Even though this activity has been in compliance with the law, DOL does not feel that

use of JTPA funds for this purpose is essential to achieve the goals of the program. Therefore employment generating activities have not been included as an eligible activity in the DOL amendment to the Act.

Firms have been enticed to lay off their existing workforce and relocate to other areas through offers of training and related services.

The prohibition in the law against the use of JTPA funds to assist in relocating establishments is clear and unambiguous, as are the provisions against using JTPA participants to displace employed workers. DOL has actively monitored compliance with these provisions and it is our conclusion that, in almost every case, the letter of the law has been honored by the system. While DOL will work to see if anything else can and should be done on this concern, it must be done carefully so that there is not a 'chilling effect' that penalizes JTPA participants by depriving them of a chance to work in all new or relocated businesses.

Most of the changes outlined in this list of concerns have been included in either the House or Senate bill on JTPA.

DOL will also implement many changes on its own, outside of any amending legislation. These include:

Quarterly round table sessions with representatives of the JTPA system, ETA and OIG to share information about audit findings and issues of common concern and get feedback and advice on potential corrective actions to address these findings.

Strengthen the Federal Monitoring role by focusing on core program integrity issues such as procurement, audits and audit resolution, and financial management. State personnel will be trained in these new Federal requirements.

Establish a National Training Institute which will provide training on a continuing basis for trainers and State and local program operators and will develop training materials for use throughout the system.

Strengthen our oversight of on-the-job training by providing guidance and direction on when and how OJT may be used and provide technical assistance regarding best approaches and contracting practices.

Ensure systems are established for program accreditation and staff credentialing to enhance the quality of JTPA services. The accreditation process would include the development of standards of excellence and peer review whereby teams of Federal, State and local employees assess the quality of each program. Staff credentialing would require the establishment of competency standards for each staff function.

DOL will be more active in administering guidance to ensure policies are put in place and carried out at the SDA and subcontractor levels. There will be more monitoring for quality as well as administration of the process itself. DOL will also require prompt corrective actions to ensure that programs are properly and effectively carried out. At the local level, DOL will ensure that PICs improve the specificity and content of service contracts, conduct rigorous contractor review and stop funding service providers who don't perform up to standards.

Assistant Secretary of Labor, **Roberts T. Jones** , outlined the status of some of these changes in a letter sent out to state JTPA liaisons in late July. DOL reviewed procurement and OJT procedures during June and July. While Secretary Jones calls the cooperation on the special reviews as excellent, he also points out the scale of corrective action efforts initiated as a consequence of the special review is without precedent in the system.

> "It is of paramount importance that States and service delivery areas maintain close monitoring and oversight in all areas of the program in order that the general quality of the program can be improved. We must make sure that all of our efforts lead to the level of integrity and competence expected by the Congress and needed by the participants."
>
> "[DOL] is planning to move foward in the near future on the joint dialogue with the Office of Inspector General and representatives of the system. We are already moving on other initiatives to improve the quality of management and services in the system. Initial planning has begun on a national training institute for training and employment. Systems to provide for accreditation/peer review of service delivery areas and credentialing of JTPA staff are under development as well. In all of these initiatives, we will have full representation of the system through committees and comment arrangements. "

WHAT DOES THE CHALLENGE OF QUALITY MEAN FOR JTPA?

The environment of change seems clear. What is being called for is a change in philosophy. SDAs are to no longer find placement as the main goal but focus on assisting those most in need meet the challenges of the labor market through personal growth, educational growth and employment skills. In many ways, these changes have already been started through changes in the performance standards. DOL monitoring has highlighted many concerns about OJT contracts, reverse referral, limited training outlines in addition to administrative procedures.

But the piece missing from this on-going discussion is assistance in making the change. What can a system with limited funds do to target a population with so many needs? Where can the line be drawn between reality and fantasy about what JTPA can accomplish? How can JTPA serve those so unmotivated they will not show up for any program?

The picture of employment and training that JTPA deals with does continue to change. Research on the Youth Employment Demonstration Project Act states that one of the reasons for failure was the instability of employment and training policy, regulations and, most importantly, funding levels. How typical that seems for JTPA as well.

A new book by the Urban Institute, *Rethinking Employment Policy*, outlines four reasons for possible failure. These are listed within **Isabel V. Sawhill's** opening article for the book with the same title:

> The [employment and training] programs have been a drop in the bucket compared to need.
>
> Many of the programs have been relatively ineffective. What is needed is reform, involving a replacement of less with more effective program models and better management.
>
> Even seemingly successful programs provide only temporary gains in employment and earnings that fade after a few years - or gains for participants that are offset by losses for equally disadvantaged nonparticipants.
>
> Even the best and most generously funded programs can be swamped by a bad economy or adverse demographic trends.

These are important points to remember as SDAs work on new approaches to training. But all policy concerns aside, it is important to remember that there have been employment and training programs in America for over 50 years. Adjustment to the needs of the time, the changing characteristics of the labor force, and the changing needs of employers is realistic for any program addressing the human resource needs of the country.

But what about the process? There are many ways to lay the groundwork for changes to be made. The Directors' Dialog points out the variety of definition and approaches that have been taken already. But there are some key items that all SDAs should consider as they struggle with the challenge of quality.

The steps outlined below are not listed in order of action. Several or all of them should be taken up at the same time.

A Process of Change

Part of the challenge of quality is developing a process of change that will allow for the broadest group of players to be involved, take ownership and see the achievements of the changes.

There are several new books out on organizational change that highlight the process for companies. The process they outline include a 'change leader' who will become the individual who guides the organization through the process. They highlight the importance of involvement from staff and outside leaders (the PIC and LEOs for JTPA), and those who will be impacted by the change (service providers and participants for JTPA). They call for the development of a vision. Vision is a statement of where you want your organization to be. It should convey a picture of where you want to go and how you want to get there. It can become the rallying point that leads the way.

Two books that provide excellent guides to the process of change are *Teaching the Elephant to Dance: Empowering Change in Your Organization* by **James A. Belasco**, Ph. D. and *Changing Ways: A Practical Tool for Implementing Change within Organizations* done for the American Management Association by **Murray M. Balziel** and **Stephen C. Schoonover**.

Teaching the Elephant to Dance points out five obstacles that should be anticipated.

• **It Always Takes Longer.** People learn slowly and forget easily. It takes a long time to change - usually a lot longer than you expected. The larger the company, the longer it takes. Since SDAs tend to be fairly small, the time frame should not be the seven years (or even two years!) it can take some companies. To achieve the change, there must be a long term commitment and those involved need short-term validation that the vision works.

The process is not an overnight process. SDAs need to identify the vision of change and try some steps. Then do an assessment of how those steps have worked, adjust as needed, and move on to more changes.

• **Exaggerated Expectations.** Everyone Wants Everything, Now. The change leader can't be a guru/hero that will continually be a model or hero for the vision. Everything won't happen right away and people may get disappointed. A better role is to be a facilitator/coach. For JTPA this means the people at the top - policy makers, directors, local elected officials - must be part of the process. If they don't buy into the change it will not happen as easily and may not happen at all.

There should be internal and external policy work groups working on the concepts of change. This allows the policy makers and staff to have a role and spreads the vision and the knowledge about the work across many more people.

• **Carping Skeptics.** Someone will always say 'That's a great idea, but ... We tried that before and it didn't work ... What makes you think you can do that?!' Cut the carping off early. Drown it in the enthusiasm of short-term progress. Confront the negative comments directly and diffuse them if they continue. Talk directly to the critics. Personally find out the problems and what can be done to improve the situation. When personal interest is shown, a critic can often be transformed into a supporter. Direct talks can also surface problems that may have been overlooked.

• **Procrastination.** To empower a new vision consumes time — like a black hole consumes light. Most of your staff face an overflowing in-basket. It's easy to see dismissing the new vision as 'just one more task to do'. 'How can I put it off' they'll likely ask themselves if not the leader. Break tasks into small pieces — or else it's likely to be postponed. Keep up a steady drumbeat,

pushing for short term action. Use the reporting system to flood the organization with information about the vision's success.

Maintain a steady flow of informal communications that stress the visions. Hold frequent meetings with employees, managers, service providers, participants and policy makers to dramatically demonstrate your vision. Success is the best antidote to the disease of procrastination.

• **Imperfection**. Aim for constant improvement rather than the attainment of some permanent nirvana. A vision does not guarantee perfection. Turn mistakes/backsliding into a learning experience. Ask those involved what can we learn, what can help us with use the vision even more effectively in the future.

Realistic Assessment

An SDA has to be realistic about the changes it can make. The process described above should include the gathering of basic information for change. This information can then help the change leader and the policy work groups focus the change discussion and action. NACo has published two Employment and Training Issues on strategic planning that speak to the importance of an environmental scan. *System Building in Chewable Bites: The Application of Strategic Issue Management in Employment and Training* and *Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs* can both be drawn upon for additional help in developing the change process.

The assessment or scan should include basic information about the community, the target populations, the other service providers, and realistic projections of future funding. The groundwork is then laid for deciding how to reach quality.

Some assessment/scan questions include:

• *Who are and where are the hard-to-serve populations within the SDA?*

Jim Gregory, director of SDA 13, the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission in Towanda, PA, developed a computer program to create a map of where different populations are located within the SDA. This mapping allows the SDA to target special programs and make choices about where to spend its limited dollars. Identification can also be assisted by the United Way organization that develops a plan each year identifying areas and populations of special need. The national United Way developed a computer program, COMPASS, that has been implemented in many local United Ways. This program creates a very in-depth analysis of the local area's human service needs.

• *Who are the other service providers in the area?*

This question provides information to help in making decisions about services that JTPA does not need to duplicate; services that are not available within the area; and places where linkages can be made. The Virginia Department of Social Services' planning guide for JOBS implementation included surveys for a variety of service providers. Local areas can use these to develop a data base of service providers, services available and possible linkages.

• *What is the realistic financial potential?*

JTPA has been maintained at approximately the same dollar level since it began. This translates to less actual dollars each year as inflation is factored into the equation. **Gwen Buseman**, SDA 2, Mason City,

Iowa decided last year that the funding instability required that the SDA take a different approach to new programs. This SDA works with service providers to help initiate new approaches with the understanding up front that it cannot provide continuing financial support. Understanding the financial possibilities also is important as SDAs struggle with the type of services to provide. More long term service means fewer individuals will be served or money to provide the service must be merged from several sources.

This assessment/scan can then be used as the SDA faces the quality questions.

- *Who will be served?*

This question cannot be based on the target populations within an area alone. JTPA, with limited funds, cannot take on participants who will need 4 years just to learn to read. There has to be at least a division of choice.

One method is the 'triage' method. Draw from military medical work it creates three groups - those who can make it on their own, those who need help to be saved, and those who require too much work to be saved. JTPA needs to realize who it can help and who needs to be referred to more basic services before JTPA can help them.

Lori Strumpf, Center for Remediation Design, uses a type of triage in her suggested three categories for participants - employable, nearly employable and pre-employable. She defines these categories as employable participants have solid basic and work skills but lack a job connection; nearly employable participants lack some basic educational, pre-employment and work maturity skills, and on- the-job training; and pre-employable participants need intensive basic education and worksite training. JTPA could work with the second group, and refer the other two groups to programs that can provide better assistance - such as Employment Service for the first group and Adult Basic Education for the third group. The pre-employable may then be referred back to JTPA when they have mastered a higher level of basic skills.

Another part of the decision is being realistic about the motivation of the individual. JTPA will have to make choices among hard to serve, at-risk individuals. The original law states that employment and training opportunities should be provided to those who can benefit from, and who are most in need of, such opportunities. Even among those who have serious barriers there are different motivation levels. While it is important to assist them with self esteem and motivation, there still must be a will to achieve.

Frankie and His Friends, a paper done for MDRC by **Max Elsman**, points out that a specific job is not a motivator for many at-risk youth. But getting their mother into her own home and out of public housing was a motivator. As shown in NACo's Employment and Training Issues written by **Jodie Sue Kelly**, *JTPA Recruitment Made (Much) Easier* and *Keeping the Client: JTPA Retention Made (Much) Easier*, focusing on what the participant wants and showing them how to achieve that is the greatest motivator there can be. There are two key components that programs must consider to increase the motivation to get involved:

- How well the range of programs and services meet the participant needs
- The financial and psychological price of participation

- *What changes should be made to ensure quality training?*

Several SDAs are making the decision that OJTs do not provide the needed training. Combinations of classroom training and worksite experience are being used. Greg Wince, CORC Job Training, Newark, OH, is moving to what he has named initially 'triangle contracts' where the responsibilities of each player - employer, employee and SDA - will be outlined. Once an individual is placed in a job, the SDA will continue to train them in needed areas and provide needed supportive services. The employer will commit to both employment and flexible schedules that allow the employee to continue to attend training. There will also be a training outline that states what the participant will learn on the job. The participant commits to regular attendance and satisfactory progress.

Identify the strengths of JTPA

Remember that JTPA has answered effectively to many challenges. The MDRC testimony pointed out JTPA has made important achievements. "... The service delivery system, based on a partnership at the local level, state oversight, and local service delivery, has been critical both in solidifying private sector support for the program and in making it responsive to the needs of employers."

Within each SDA there are many successes. Strong linkages developed that were only dreamed about seven years ago. Youth programs that address the needs of potential dropouts and link together funding from multiple sources. Adult programs that help individuals learn to read in a setting that gives them the chance to see how it impacts their world immediately.

These pats on the back to the program itself, the Private Industry Council, the local elected officials, the service providers and staff involved can put a positive light on the changes to be made. The purpose for change is not to respond to negative criticism but to draw upon and grow from past successes. The work environment is changing, how can this great program meet the challenge and do what it always does - a great job.

But success cannot be the stopping point. *Teaching the Elephant to Dance* points out that success can tie you to the past. The very factors that produced today's success often create tomorrow's failure.

Communicate with the State and Department of Labor

DOL has outlined many changes it plans to make already. Some are being discussed with SDA administrators as DOL completes monitoring on OJT procedures and procurement. But it is important for SDAs to make clear to both the state and DOL what is needed to help them make the change.

Many areas believe that DOL is very willing to point out the mistakes but is not as helpful in providing assistance on how to correct those mistakes and move on to better programs. Hindsight is always easier than foresight. Many critics are judging JTPA based on data from 1985 and 1986. It is hard to judge whether changes have already been put in place when analysis is not being made on current data.

Acknowledgment of both strengths and weaknesses and asking for help to guide the local area to better processes may help DOL and the States see that local areas understand the concern and are willing to work on change. It may also encourage them to add more technical assistance to the monitoring and compliance work going on now.

The Iowa SDA Association recently responded to comments made by **Bill Hood**, DOL Region VII Deputy Regional Administrator, about the JTPA program.

> " There is a very strong feeling on the part of the Iowa Job Training Partnership Directors that the actions of the program in 1983, 1984, 1985, and 1986 are being judged by the standards and circumstances that exist in 1989 and 1990. You do not need to be reminded that the economic climate of 1983 does not in any way compare to the situation that exits today. Iowa is a clear example of that fact. Double digit unemployment was common place in 1983. A long and miserable farm crisis was beginning. In 1990, double digit unemployment is almost unheard of. Near full employment is common place. Record farm income, propped up by huge federal support payments, has occurred in the last two years.
>
> In retrospect, it is easy to say that the program was creaming. Now, we can assert that the

program served those that did not need our services. Then it was different. With double digit unemployment, a lot of people were knocking at the door. Most of them had decent work histories and were victims of the time and economy. The trust is that programs of that era did not have the courage to turn these people away in order to serve a most in need population that would have had an almost impossible time of getting a job in that economy while competing with the 'cream'.

In large part, the creaming issue has become a non-issue. The people that come through program doors now, usually after much effort to interest them are very different than the people seen in the early to mid eighties. The characteristics of applicants, and it follows, participants, reflect the dominant circumstances of the time.

The Job Training Partnership is not perfect. It also is not the evil program the current critics' renditions would have the non-employment and training world believe. Perhaps what the amendments should really do is create an employment and training program that can transition from economic era to era without falling prey to the kind of criticism that this legislation has. Perhaps it should be accepted that we will always need employment and training programs, but what will change is the thrust of those programs as cyclical influences emerge. Knee jerk amendments to economic and political circumstances have the impact of keeping employment and training programs always on the cliff."

DIRECTORS DIALOG

The Directors Dialog draws upon three Directors - James Ledbetter, Director, SDA 18, Concho Valley Council of Governments, San Angelo, Texas; Greg Wince, Director, CORC Job Training, Newark, Ohio; and Swen Buseman, Director, SDA 2, North Iowa Area Community College, Mason City, Iowa. All of these directors, along with many others in the JTPA system , are struggling with the changes facing JTPA and finding great answers. NACo encourages other directors to write up their steps to change - especially concerning client selection and matching, job relevant intruction and job placement/quality employment. These can then be used in NACo's series on the Challenge of Quality.

How is Quality defined in your SDA?

Quality has to be defined in terms of investment for the taxpayer. When translated to the participant it means that adults should achieve long term unsubsidized employment and youth should achieve a high school diploma with employment, college or armed services to follow.

James Ledbetter

Quality is provided through a workforce readiness concept that identifies a series of needed skills to ready the individual for the workforce. These are personal skills - self awareness, esteem, problem solving; educational skills - ranging from literacy to highly technical training; and employability skills. The SDA is stressing more personal development and placing less focus on actual employment. Quality workers are flexible and can adjust to different work environments.

There are three customers. People needing help - the SDA often acts as a surrogate mother for them; Employers - the SDA acts as a training advocate; and Funding Sources.

Greg Wince

I look at our JTPA program activities and outcomes from a taxpayer's point of view. As a taxpayer, I am getting my money's worth if the program:

a) produced results which would not happen without the JTPA intervention, either financial or nonfinancial. Sometimes our contribution is classroom training money, but it can also be experience in a competency based approach to teaching employment skills or leadership in organization a group of agencies to work together to deliver a service;

b) produced results consistent with the purpose of the Act;

c) Leverages other resources so that benefits provided from all sources exceeds the amount of JTPA funds invested.

Gwen Buseman

How did the SDA develop that definition?

I always knew that we had to answer to the intent of the law to our upmost ability. This required that we have the right staff, minimize mistakes, and administer the program by quality. The council of governments has been concerned and involved since day one in ensuring the best program. Everything we do happens in the best interest of who JTPA is intended for - the participants and the taxpayers.

James Ledbetter

Simple addition. A 70,001 program for at-risk youth + NAB emphasis on workforce readiness + considerable experience + criticisms of JTPA, some of which were valid = a new direction for our program. Initially we resisted all the flack but as we thought about it - when was the OJT really beneficial to the client? It is beneficial when there is a training objective, assessment, and out placement. Most of those who come to our program want a job. We have to give both the employer and the participant something they do not already have.

Greg Wince

It has been an evolutionary process. The team philosophy that guides the process has grown from staff and PIC discussions over the years. The SDA has drawn upon discussion, research and publications from the national, regional, state and local level on the history and issues of job training. Watching the applicants and participants go the the JTPA systems has made the team more aware of their needs, what other resources are avialable to them and what JTPA can do that is not available elsewhere. Our definition of those who are most in need has changed to mean not only those with great barriers, but those who have no other services availalbe to help them.

JTPA has to give the participant a foundation that allows them to be a more valuable employee and that provides necessary skills to move on to additional jobs as the labor market changes. We also have to think furturistically for local businesses so they can be helped with the changes that are coming down the line.

Gwen Buseman

How is the SDA achieving quality?

We overstep the verbiage in the act and develop partnerships. These partnerships have been with welfare, school districts, education service centers, elected officials and more. We overlook who gets the credit and look at how to get the best result for the participants. Our philosophy from day 1 has been extremely progressive. The SDA goes for creativity and innovation. While this can mean mistakes occasionally, you cannot stop the process for a mistake. You learn from that mistake and go on.

James Ledbetter

Our SDA is both administrative and operational. We expect to operate less job skill development and focus more on personal skill development. The marketing approach is changing the emphasis from job to training. There will be more measuring of what is learned by the participant through competencies and criteria for success within contracts. If the individual has personal and educational skills, those should be enough to move them on to the labor market. OJTs will be done in a way that provides for continued education for the participant once they enter the job.

The PIC is focusing on being a community wide employment and training board that gets everyone together and works on the policy needs of the community.

Greg Wince

The top of the funnel has been enlarged. We welcome as many people in as possible to see if they believe JTPA would be helpful and necessary for them. Then we have narrowed the neck of the funnel to select the ones who are most in need to be served with JTPA funds. Much staff time is required to be aware and up-to-date on other sources of assistance in the area, both to know if someone could be serviced in a non-JTPA program, and to know where to seek additional resources if an individual needs more financial assistance than our local limits allow. The intake and training staff prepare a written description of each applicant's and participant's situation for the file, documenting why they are or are not most in need of training from JTPA.

OJTs are used very little. The emphasis is on basic skills, classroom training, job seeking, and other pre-employment training skills. When employers see that the applicants we have available for the job are competent, trained and job ready, they will hire them without a cash subsidy. We add a sort of 'money-back guarantee', however. If a participant is hired who needs additional classroom training or job keeping skills instruction during the first 90 days, we provide short-term help through the community college at no cost to the employers.

All participants go through the ACE motivation seminar to help them see they have the potential to succeed.

Gwen Buseman

How are staff, PIC members and local elected officials involved?

The staff is very involved. As director, I set the direction and ensure funding. The staff is allowed to be totally empowered to develop and operate programs, even in mistakes. The policy board of the council of governments and the PIC are also very involved in creating direction.

James Ledbetter

The staff developed the concepts of change. We used staff retreats with consultants coming in to help us go through the ideas and concepts. The PIC and local elected officials set the organizational goals and are involved with the basic strategies for the organization. The changing environment was put on the table for the PIC and LEOs :

JTPA does not have a lot of political support.
Future funding levels are in question.
How JTPA was provided needed to be rethought.
OJTs seemed to be providing just money to the employers.
JTPA needed to help move business more to education and investment in the workforce.

Greg Wince

The PIC members are encouraged to carry out a dialogue on the issues of who we should be serving and how. The LEOs are kept informed of what the program needs to accomplish. They are also aware that their careful and thoughtful appointment of individuals to the PIC determines the achievement of those outcomes. The PIC and LEOs agreed that the program should be operated to give individual participants the greatest likelihood of reaching their employment goals. If there are cases when actual performance is lower than the adjusted performance standards for the SDA, the standards take a lower priority.

The staff are dedicated to serving the individuals on the program. We could all earn more money somewhere else but choose to do this work because we believe we are making a difference. We welcome the freedom JTPA gives us to make local decisions which allow us to live up to a higher standard than a federal government manual might mandate.

Gwen Busemen

Where will JTPA go within the next two years?

They are trying to spank the whole class for mistakes. Accountability through paper will grow until accountability and paper become the goal. There has to be a vision that can provide direction, but it cannot be lost in the process.

James Ledbetter

JTPA is a good design but the role of the Governors in management is the weak point. There are 50 chief executive officers! The secretary of DOL should be the chief executive officer.

The change in the performance standards is good. Why drive a system to placement through the standards and then be disappointed that they achieve that goal? If the amendments do not pass, DOL will increase its oversight role and JTPA will survive only a few more years.

JTPA needs to fill the gap for youth who do not go on to college. Within schools, there is much emphasis placed on going to college and being a failure if you do not make it. But this is not true, there are many important jobs for those who do not go to college. Employers and schools need to focus more on the skills needed not just the education level achieved.

Greg Wince

In our SDA, we are emphasizing using JTPA resources effectively as a creative catalyst. We will use the national input on skill employees need as a starting point for contacting employees and obtaining input about their specific needs locally.

Nationally, I hope to see the DOL focus on providing definitions of quality and giving us the freedom to pursue it. We need a base level of funding assured for each SDA. We need money, like 6% incentive dollars, which has 'no strings attached' and can be used to invest in program building through coordination, new program design, etc. We need relief from administrative cost limitations, especially on the basis of expenditures as proposed by the current amendments in HR 2039. We need to spend much less time on cost allocation and more time serving people. JTPA must not be used as a scapegoat to prove to the Reader's Digest that the federal government is accountable.

Gwen Buseman

Examples of Quality

The Preparing Area Youth for Success (PAYS) High School's primary goal is to re-enroll and graduate one-third of the high school dropouts from San Angelo, Texas. It provides them with a quality environment of genuine care and understanding conducive to learning, as well as enhancing each student's potential for full-time unsubsidized employment through education.

The services and program are tailored for those who have failed to make it in a traditional high school. It addresses personal needs through drug and alcohol counseling, day care, support and encouragement and opportunities to build self-confidence. It has a flexible schedule to allow students to maintain employment and still complete high school. Individualized instruction and self paced computer assisted curriculum also provide training responsive to individual needs.

The school is the joint effort of the Concho Valley Private Industry Council, the Concho Valley Council of Governments, the San Angelo Independent School District and the Education Service Center Region XV. Business and community organizations involved include Johnson and Johnson, Levi Strauss and Company,

Texas Department of Human Services, San Angelo Day Nursery, Shannon Medical Center, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Alateen.

Operating since 1988, the school has graduated 118 students. Its goal continues to be to serve at least 1/3 of the dropouts in San Angelo. It received the national JTPA Presidential Award, March 1990, in the special award category.

James Ledbetter

In the past, CORC Job Training would terminate participants once they were employed. Now they plan to get participants jobs and continue to do training. This system requires a new sort of contract, initially called Triangle contracts. These contracts outline responsibilities of the SDA, participant and employer. The SDA's responsibility will be to help employers find a good employee; arrange an ongoing training schedule that will provide needs of both the employee and employer; and provide needed support services such as substance abuse counseling and child care. The employee commits to satisfactory progress, regular attendance, and regular communication with the case manager. The employer agrees to a flexible schedule to allow for the training, information on the skills needed for the position, and ongoing evaluation of progress.

The SDA sees its role for employers changing to that of training advocate, providing assistance on training needed for new staff. The sell may not be easy, since companies need to be flexible about work schedules and how soon a participant will be ready for full employment. But the changing workforce lays the groundwork for a new approach.

Greg Wince

Serving as a catalyst for new programs has already started in SDA 2 with the STAR Center at the Mason City High School. Developed for dropout preventation, it includes computer assisted instruction, self esteem development through both self esteem workshops that assume those most likely to succeed just don't know they have the ability and outdoor challenge courses that brings together teams of youth to find ways to succeed. Assessment includes learning styles and study skills. The center has been jointly funded. The first year, JTPA bought computers and paid for two instructors. The second year, JTPA paid two instructors as well. The third year, JTPA will pay for one instructor and the school board has just passed a budget that will completely take over financial responsibility for the center next year.

Future changes include for SDA programs include implementing thinking skills as a parallel to classroom training. A self motivation seminar, ACE, used by the SDA , will now be available for all new career program students at the community college. A mentor program will be developed to work with at-risk youth and other participants as well as applicants who need JTPA support but cannot be served due to limited funding.

The new HIRED program provides assessment, motivation seminar and referral to needed services to anyone interested in seeking a job. The funding for this program comes from ABE, Job Service, JTPA and the community college. This new program helps JTPA in targeting its services more efficiently, ensuring that those with an interest and need are still connected with services that can help them, and allows the referral system already in place to continue to operate.

Gwen Buseman